

MEMORANDUM

To: Tenmile South Helena Forest Restoration Committee, the City of Helena, stakeholders, resources, and media
From: Sarah Elkins, City of Helena Point-of-Contact
Date: February 21, 2017
Re: Meeting notes for Wednesday, February 8, 2017 Collaborative meeting from 1:30pm-3:30pm in room 426 of the City-County Building

Attendance

Collaborative Committee Members – Chairman Joe Cohenour, conservation organization representative, Co-Vice Chair Jordan Alexander, fire community representative, Co-Vice Chair Mike Bishop, citizen at-large representative, Brad Langsather, City of Helena representative (for Ron Alles), Doug Powell, citizen at-large, Gary Marks, commercial use representative, Susan Good-Geise, Lewis and Clark County Representative

Resources – Abigail Lane (FS), Sarah Elkins (City of Helena), Lois Olsen (Elkhorn Restoration Committee)

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:30PM

REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes requested or suggested.

HEAR THE PUBLIC

No comments.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

- TSHC re-authorization – Nothing to report. A committee will be convened in March or April to review the current resolution and make suggested changes to present to the city manager and City Commission in May. Resolution must be on a Commission agenda in June.
- Joe shared that he was asked to give the presentation he gave to the city commission in early February to the Helena Citizens Council at their meeting on February 22, 2017.
- Forest Plan Public Meeting – update from attendees: All agreed that the relationships among the current local leadership for the USFS, local residents, and regional agencies (collaboratives, local governments), are strong, more transparent, and open.

Attendees thought the structure of the meeting was different from previous public meetings of this nature; discussion was not as specific in terms of what guests were expecting. Some residents were disappointed with the change, but most agreed it was a productive meeting. It was good that the geographic areas were separated into sections, as opposed to the 1986 plan, which was an overall plan with a break-out only of a section of the Elkhorns. Separating the plan into geographic areas allows the public to comment on specific sections that they know well and have specific goals and ideas in terms of treatment of those areas.

All agreed that it was generally positive energy throughout the meeting, different from meetings in other regions and for the 1986 forest plan. A fall release is planned for the DEIS, with a final plan to be released a year later, in fall 2018.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Lois Olsen reviewed the differences between the '86 plan and the current draft:

She started by saying she was impressed with the current forest plan revision team. The scientists and other staff worked hard to collaborate and coordinate a solid plan. She reminded the group that EVERY WORD MATTERS in the current revision. The difference between using “should” and “will” is huge. Every word must be able to withstand micro-criticism, potential litigation, and other risks.

Mike noticed that in Lois’ comments, she included details that weren’t even in the plan. Others agreed that her comments were very specific and detailed, and useful to the revision team and to members of the collaborative.

Lois suggested that collaborative members take time for a detailed review of the first 100 pages of the plan, because those refer to all geographic areas affected by it. She said this plan is completely different from the ’86 plan in structure and form. She also suggested the collaborative review the ’86 plan, particularly the H1, and H2 sections. Joe said he would email a link to collaborative members.

Lois suggested including a note about the five additional documents in the appendices that could not be commented on because they were not available or are incomplete:

- A. Monitoring Program
- B. Maps
- C. Potential management Approaches and Possible Actions
- D. Vegetation Classification and Development of Vegetation plan Component
- E. Priority Watersheds
- F. Evaluation of Wilderness Inventory Areas
- G. Wild and Scenic Rivers Eligibility Study Process
- H. Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction Record of Decision

She said to be constructive with every comment, including the “why” and potential solutions.

On page 112, ecological characteristics, wildlife areas are not mentioned in the Lazyman and Spotted Dog areas, which are important winter ranges and need protection. Those areas must be managed differently for portions of the year. Winter range must be added into plan components, and the collaborative may wish to add clear descriptions to add to the plan. The 2nd paragraph mentions specific wildlife areas, but there is no mention of areas north of the highway.

Doug said that Lazyman is a really important area to protect, and that we couldn’t have predicted the current recreation activity in the area. We must plan for future use. A good description may be “primitive non-motorized – means no mechanized or motorized use” for primitive IRA and wilderness areas. (What about horseback? That has impact as well.)

Mike and Lois mentioned the plan is missing some major things like mining in the socio-economic impacts section. One of Lois’ comments is to include more cultural/historic information in terms of this area being a sustainable resource. The Tenmile area is NOT

virgin land... when looking at the history; it was exploited for many years. If the history and culture is not included directly, perhaps links to more information could be added.

All agreed that the plan does not include enough research and information about wetlands in the ecological characteristics section, and those are important and unique to the area. The group agreed to take the original collaborative comments (submitted in April 2016) to include in the current forest plan, particularly the comments on the riparian areas.

Susan asked about the impact of grazing on the area, and where that would be mentioned in the current FP draft. Lois pointed out the sections and relevant pages for review. Lois suggested the words are very good in terms of the plan, but that ranchers may not understand the impact of those words. All mentions of livestock impact should be in one section. Language must be clarified to avoid future conflict.

Divide Geographic Area: Distinctive Roles and Contributions

Ecological Characteristics

- Pg. 112 – last sentence, “Historic mining has impacted water quality in lower Tenmile Creek and also the Little Blackfoot River.” – Very vague, please discuss further

Social and Economic Characteristics (pg. 113)

- List all designated campgrounds in this section
- CDNST & cross country ski trails get washed together, CDNST warrants its own paragraph, highly significant area for this GA
- “The Divide GA also remains host to many active mining claims...” – place to discuss the repository

Cultural and Historical Characteristics (pg. 113)

- Should continue with discussion on the legacy of mining, timber, railroad, and second growth forest.
- Emphasize the role of all the special uses in the area – ***Potential to discuss in the Special Emphasis and permitted Areas*** section (pg. 114).
 - o Recreation residences (99 yr. leases) - add
 - o Shooting range - add
 - o Residences in Rimini – add

General discussion on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)

- Are the maps provided in appendices existing conditions? Are they final? – *Abby will follow up*
- Rules on the ROS – specifically the criteria for roads. – *Abby will follow up*
- Pg. 50 Design Criteria (DC) in ROS – regarding mechanical vs. non-motorized use vs. motorized
- Forest Wide Proposed Action: ***IRA Desired Conditions 04 (pg. 60)*** “Inventoried roadless areas provide remote primitive and semi primitive recreation opportunities in a natural setting”
 - o Very vague
 - o What do they mean? Was is left vague for a reason?

- Primitive (wilderness values) vs. semi-primitive non – motorized (mechanized equipment are often present, e.g. bikes) vs. semi-primitive (managed for backcountry motorized use on designated routes).

Brief Discussion – on the future, we need to think into the future for this Forest Plan Revision. Something we did not do with the FP in 1986. What will there be in the future more motorized vehicle use, future of mountain bikes, snow bikes, drones? Plan for 20 -30yrs.

- No net gain of trails or roads (build a trail/road, close a trail/road)

Scenic Integrity (pg. 115) – do not understand. (Document states to refer to Forest Wide Scenery for plan components, refer to pg. 53)

Forest Wide Proposed Action: Riparian Management Zones, Guidelines 04 (pg.22)

- “To reduce the likelihood of sediment input to streams, new road construction in riparian management zones should be avoided, including temporary roads, except where necessary for stream crossings”
 - Needs a tighter guidelines – include language to the extent of, ‘avoid road construction unless there are no other options and analysis proves no/limited impact.’

Is Tenmile Creek a priority watershed? – Abby will try to find out the answer

- Need to set goals, objectives, and guidelines on how sustain it

Forested Vegetation (pg.116)

- Has it been updated to include acknowledge live vs. dead cover type of lodgepole pine
- Potential to discuss old growth in this section (refer to pg. 34 forest wide old growth components).
- Non-forest vegetation vs. invasive weeds at the GA level
 - What are the long term treatment goals? Would biological controls be useful?

Wildlife (pg. 117)

- Not very specific to wildlife in this section
- Add something about significant winter range in this GA

South Hills Recreation Area (pg. 117)

- Add a discussion of mining in this area

FUTURE MEETING DATES AND AGENDA ITEMS:

March 8, 2017 – 1pm-4pm at the Helena Forest Service Office, Elkhorn Tizer conference room.

- Meeting will focus on break-out group comments
- Projector will be available
- Forest Service will provide easel pads

March 22 1 – 4 pm at the Helena Forest Service Office

- Finalize comments

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 4:00 PM